THAT WAS DREAM WORTH BUILDING

A TRIBUTE AND RETROSPECT

BY LOUIS J. STELLMANN

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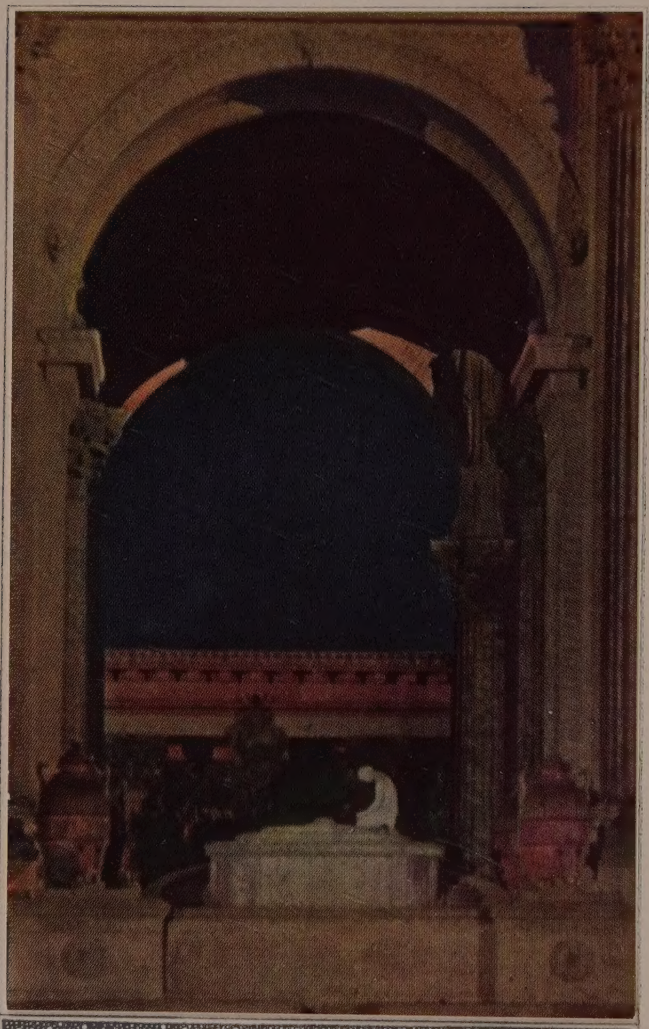

Night Study of Fine Arts Dome Showing Figure by Ralph Stackpole

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THAT WAS A DREAM WORTH BUILDING

THE SPIRIT OF SAN FRANCISCO'S
GREAT FAIR PORTRAYED IN PICTURE
AND WORDS BY

LOUIS J. STELLMANN

REPRODUCTIONS FROM THE AUTHOR'S
EXCLUSIVE CAMERA STUDIES AS
COLORED BY
EDITH KINNEY STELLMANN

WITHDRAWI

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VALE!

Farewell, O My City of Wonder!
Farewell, O My City of Dreams!
Thy triumph of Beauty and Color,
Thy magic of scintillant gleams
Are ended for ever and ever.
So short was thy glory, so keen,—
It seems like a marvelous fancy,
A vision that never has been.

No more, like a Valley of Jewels,
At night will thy radiance glow;
No more will thy mystic aurora
Of light-beacons flash to and fro
Across the horizon and onward
Afar into unfathomed space
To kindle our souls with a fervor
Of passionate beauty and grace.

VALE!

(Continued)

No more will thy courts and pavilions
Resound with the festival tread
Of crowds nor the glad hum of voices.
All silent and empty and dead
Thy once-merry parks. Bleak and withered
The riot of color and bloom;—
An Eden unpeopled and blighted!
A Fairyland gone to its doom!

And yet—in our hearts is a memory
Of rapture that never can fade.
Forever the spirit revisits
Bright garden and dim colonnade
To drink, like a fresh inspiration,
The wine of a vanished repast;
To feast on the sweet recollection
Of splendors too vivid to last.

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By LOUIS J. STELLMANN

As I remember it first—this wondrous Dream City of ours—it was a sort of celebrant hope, a prospective, half-nebulous crown for a king not yet arisen: the contemplated climax of the uncompleted Panama Canal.

Many, many years it seems to me now, since this first whispering of a great World Holiday in a city of achievement, especially in merrymaking. But it was no new idea, the creation of an international playground

for a season and it caused no furore nor remarkable enthusiasm.

We of San Francisco live very much in the Present. We cross bridges when we come to them, and if there are no bridges—we build them. That is our way.

And then came the Fire. I say the Fire, for the Earthquake was a little thing beside it. We had had earthquakes before. We will have them again. But the Fury of Flame that came with it was near to our undoing. We had to build up a city again. In three years we did it—the city that the World declared could not be built in ten—and then we came back to our Dream.

The Exposition at Dusk

It seemed to me as though we carried the banners of that dream through a storm of obstacles such as no city ever knew before, carried them, battered and torn, but steadily and never faltering to the goal—planted them there proud and panting.

It seemed as though the World were massed against us; first our own state, then our country, then the nations over-sea. First Rivalry, then Enmity, then Apathy and later still, Turmoil of Circumstance such as no previous years had known.

All of them we conquered through our Faith, our Singleness of Purpose, our invincible desire to perpetuate the Dream. That was how it began.

Fountain of Energy Reflected in a Lagoon of the South Gardens; Palace of Horticulture and Italian Towers in Background

IT WAS a sorry place enough that was selected as a site—the garden of our Wonderland-to-be. Desolate it was, forsaken, littered o'er with huts, débris and stagnant pools. One would have thought that it would take more than a magic wand to fashion it into a beauty spot for all of the World's peoples. And, for the first year, it became even more repellant. Where there had been rubbish and peace there came a very terror of confusion—an activity so vicious and chaotic of appearance that it chafed the spirit past all patience.

Shouting and bustle and discord and running about! Steam whistles and rumbling of trucks, the blows of

A Sunlit Colonnade in the Court of Flowers

hammers, the terrible staccato of drills, the whine of revolving saws,—a mixture of noise and matter, indescribable.

We shunned the place and wondered—even though we peeped at it curiously, now and then, and went quickly away. For a long time it seemed to go on without change, save that the noises became more strident, the piles of wood and iron larger, more nondescript.

And then, quite suddenly there seemed to emanate from all this turbulence a hint of order, some promise of a plan, a great plan—the beginning of our Dream!

Henceforth we came oftener, we Dreamers of the Dream, we San Fran-

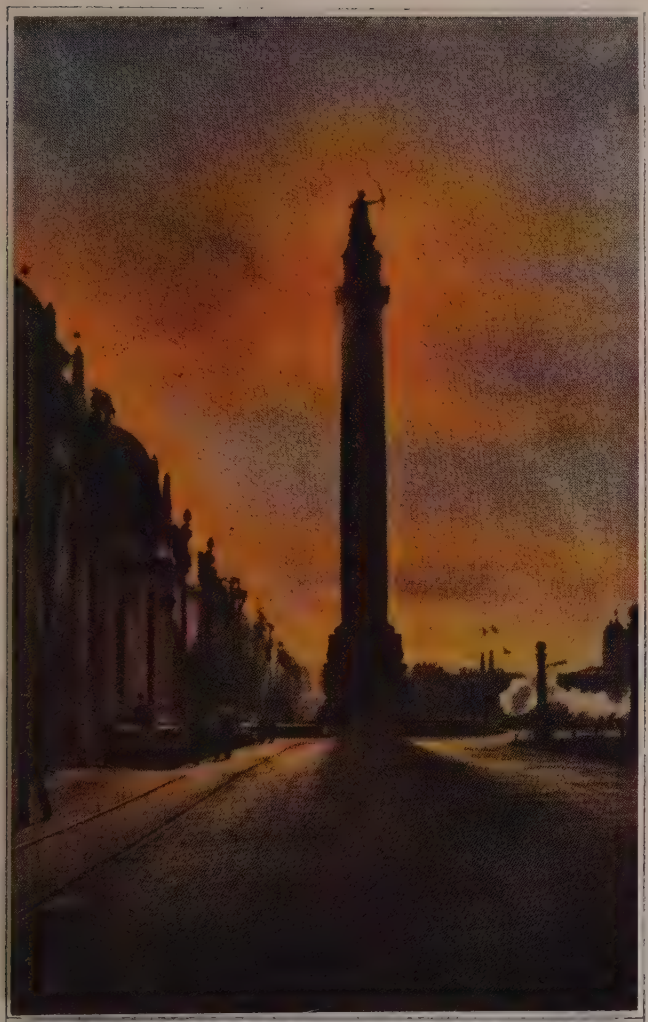
Towers of California Building at Night

ciscans, and, little by little, we became Planners of the Plan instead.

For, as it grew, so did our understanding of it: of its scope, its far-reaching purpose, its inevitable effect upon the World.

Of our understanding came appreciation. Pride entered into us with realization of the magnitude, the marvel of our work,—a pride that bred no haughty idleness of self-esteem, but feverish desire for co-operation.

Thus we became a City of Workers, each in his separate field; each doing his labor, large or small, important or insignificant, with equal fervor and delight of service. We thought of little else. The gaze of us all was centered



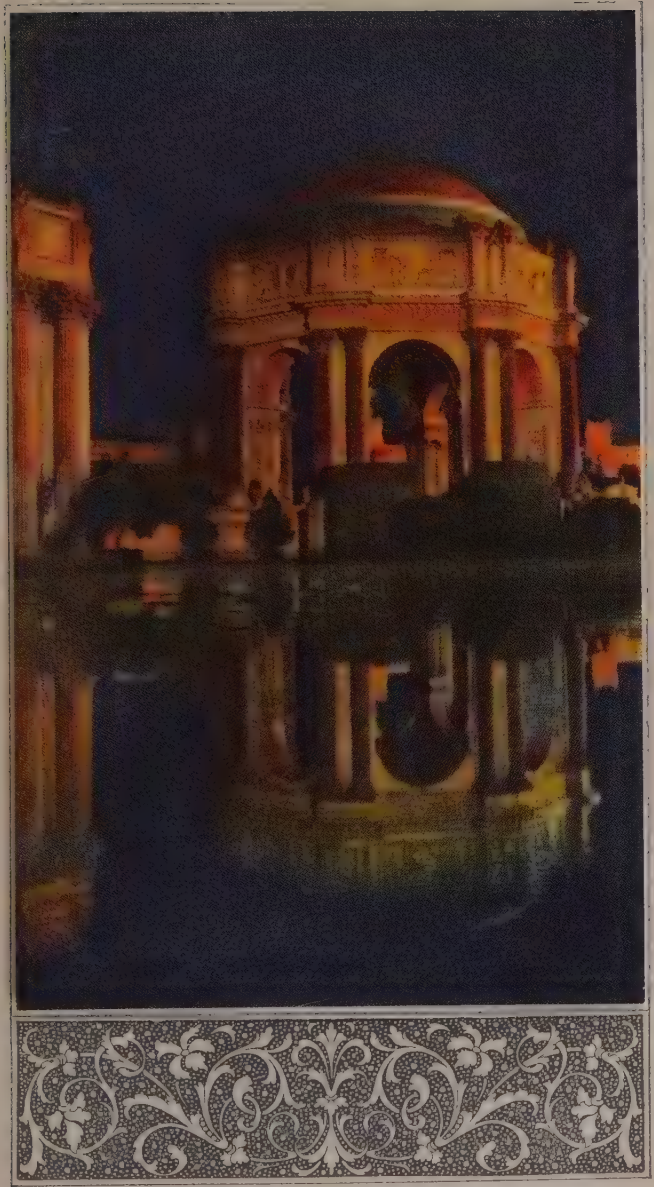
Shaft of Progress and Statue of Adventurous Bowman, Outlined Against a Sunset Sky

on the building of this wondrous spectacle—our Dream.

As it took definite shape, this great Purpose Harmony of our Half Million, it became a magnet that drew unto itself the aid of Dream Builders everywhere.

They came to us from the East and the West, the North and the South—the men who love great undertakings—and enlisted under our flag.

Men of many talents they were: Painters with brushes and words, Chiselers of marble and landscapes, moulders of clay and of mansions, Chieftains of System and Color, Wizards of light, Generalissimos of Amusement, Knights of Nonsense, Captains



A Night View of the Fine Arts Dome with its Wonderful Reflection

of Display, Apostles of Order, Agents of Expediency, Economy, Service.

A mighty hierarchy were they: all Planners and Builders of Dreams! And, wonder of wonders! all building a dream together in accord and amity, in zeal and efficiency incomparable.

Under them an army of trained and united workers, back of them a city, a state, a country—nay, a world of watchers and well-wishers. For now that the Dream was building and some knowledge of its beauty had been rumored round about, the peoples of the Earth stood on tip-toe, as children watch the trimming of a Christmas tree, eager to see it finished, impatient to share in its joys.

A Misty Day in the Fine Arts Colonnade, and a Glimpse of the Half Dome Doorway in Palace of Education

And so through the last year of its development, we watched it rising, spire by spire, building by building, dome by dome, from the hilltops all about this dream-site, once so desolate. And then we came closer, unsatisfied with distant glimpses. In among the scaffolding, round about the drays and trucks, between the plaster giants, uncompleted, through the mud of embryo gardens and along the banks of unfinished lagoons, we made our way.

A Foggy Night in the Court of Flowers, Showing Festival Hall and Fountain of Beauty and the Beast

We saw ungainly skeletons of wood and iron growing into shapes of wondrous grace and beauty, trees arise from bogs, French gardens from wastes of mire, fountains and pools from ditches and sloughs.

Flowers bloomed as though by magic, colonnades and arches shook off their wooden shells, figures sprang, full armed, from roofs and columns. Litter and confusion vanished silently.

Our eyes beheld the material form of our Dream, a splendid substance, almost too grand for our comprehension. And we deemed it a miracle of beauty and were glad.

Yet this was but the bare, crude surface. As we watched it, day by

Administration Drive and Half Dome of Education and Food Products Palaces at Night

day, with growing wonder, the mystery of color transfused itself throughout it all, made it glow with some weird animation—like a statue that has come to life.

First the warm tints of the general scheme, then relief that sprang out in a multitude of shades and blended with the budding reds and greens and yellows of a new-born floral wealth. Then the details of great murals and their symbolism, the blue or green of sunlit waters a grand ensemble to delight the heart.

But, even yet our dream was incomplete. With night came flashing fires of opal, emerald, ruby, turquoise, amethyst; great beacon lights that

Marina and Domes from the Yacht Harbor, Showing Aeroplane in Flight

swept and searched the sky, a marvelous chromatic spread of color, such as Queen Aurora might have used to fan the mystic fires of an Arctic day to life.

At last we were ready. Our banquet hall was spread and decorated for the entertainment of the World.

It was a great day for San Francisco, that day our dream came true in all its full and rich fruition.

A Section
of the Fine
Arts
Peristyle

We could scarcely wait for dawn, so eager were we and glad and filled with fine anticipation. Like a Host of Triumph, two hundred thousand strong, we marched, through biting winds and spurts of rain, singing, waving aloft our banners, crying aloud our delight. Like a throng of children starving for a holiday, we descended on the Portals of our Dream, entered, played among its sights and scenes. Fatigue we knew not. Time stopped its course within our reckoning.

It was little different from yesterday in all truth. Yet the spirit of aeons lay between.

Today was *Today!*

Base of One of the Great Fountains in the Court of the Universe at Night

It was the festive release from our long suspense of waiting. The apex of our Dream!

What can I say of the months that followed? So short they seemed, we could not understand. So brief and wonderful and full of glory.

Glad crowds everywhere, Beauty rampant, wonder in the eyes of five races, delight in the minds of a hundred nations' folk, a million human types in glad communion.

Festivity over all. Entertainment for everyone. Music for those that loved it. Floral triumphs for the nature-lover. Art for the pictorially-inclined. Charm for a multitude of varied peoples. Education. Inspiration.

The Beautiful Dome of the Fine Arts Palace and Hawaiian Carnival Boat on the Lagoon

Food for all of the senses. For Spirit and Mind as well!

We, whose dream it was, soon came to see that it had been a World Dream; that the millions whose lives have been starved of Beauty, near and afar, had dreamed this dream. Their yearning had helped us to build it. And then we were proud with a pride hitherto unknown, that our dream might be shared by these throngs from the whole of Life's pathways.

And we knew that our dream would live forever.

It was a comforting thought, as the days went by, for, ever and anon, we said to ourselves or one another:

Arch of the Rising Sun in Court of the Universe at Night

"Soon it will be over."

It seemed as though we spoke of a friend who was dying. Who daily grew weaker and more sweet, the loss of whom seemed ever a grief more poignant, a void more unbearable to contemplate.

That is how we loved our Dream!

Between whiles we said, "Let us laugh and enjoy what we may." And we went to our Dreamland more often, stayed longer, drank deeper of its joy.

Soon the time came when we said, "It is tomorrow," and we said it silently within ourselves, for it was not a thought to be spoken aloud. Then the day came—The Last Day!

Column of Progress and Reflection from the Court of the Universe

We are a merry-making city, so we called it a holiday. We sang loudly and thronged the gates. We were feverishly glad. We went early and stayed late—long after midnight. We heard the farewell speeches. We saw the buildings closed for the last time. We saw the lights come on, slowly and glow for a little while. We watched them go out, one by one—forever.

Our Dream was over.

And yet—And yet—

We that have thought it all out know that our dream has only begun.

We builded only the substance—that substance of wondrous beauty

Detail of Fine Arts Colonnade and Statue of "Young Pan"

and delight and inspiration—upon the shores of our bay, within the hollow of our sheltering hills.

That substance is doomed and, ah, the pity of it!

Would that it, too, might last forever, like its image within our memory, like its eternal and uplifting message to mankind.

But the dream that we builded was greater than wood or plaster or iron or stone. Our dream was a thing imperishable, a dream of Love and Yearning for better things, of Inspiration, of Fraternity, of Soul Striving.

We built it upon human hearts; nay, into the fibre of Humanity itself our dream has entered, to become

Dusk In the Court of the Universe. Showing Arch of the Setting Sun and Fountains of Day and Night

a heritage for future good, for beauty and achievement in generations upon generations yet unborn.

And the message of our Dream!

That has gone to the ends of the Earth, upon human tongues, through the potency of words and deeds and thoughts.

What is that message?

Many have tried to tell us but none have succeeded. The dream has done it alone. Those who have seen it know its message even though they cannot speak it aloud. And they have made it known to their kindred afar, without words.

It seems, indeed, a thing beyond words, this message. A something

Detail of the Fine Arts Colonnade from Western Entrance with Figure of Weeping Muse

that the heart feels and the spirit senses, the glory and fulness of which words may only suggest, but a message that has rung its meaning, clear and limpid, like a bell-stroke, through the globe.

Oh, that was a dream worth building!

And, now we must see the substance perish. We must see our glad gardens fade and their bloom disappear. We must watch our palaces and mansions crumble, our fountains be stilled and shattered. We must see our Fairy-land blighted, our Eden unpeopled, despoiled of its beauty and joy.

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We are like Cinderella, when the hour of midnight has struck.

That is hard, but it is Life.

Thus all of our dreams are born; are developed and finished—and destroyed. Thus Time, like the waves of the sea, wipes out our dear Castles of Sand.

Yet, in our hearts all that is worthy shall linger.

In the hearts of the multitude all that is truly great shall endure.

Like a seed of great dreams it shall ripen into a harvest of greater and still greater dreams, until the End of Things.

So let us be glad of the Dream we have builded. And, to the passing of that exquisite shadow which has grown out of it and lived for a time, let us not give too long nor too wistful a thought.

It were better to build more dreams.

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